

May 31, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PSC RECOMMENDS NUMBER POOLING MEASURES
TO FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

LINCOLN -- The Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) recommended to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that states be given delegated authority to implement mandatory number pooling to conserve valuable numbering resources.

Nebraska and four other states - Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia - received authority from the federal agency in February to implement number pooling in blocks of 1,000 telephone numbers rather than blocks of 10,000 numbers as previously required. This authority will allow Nebraska to continue to extend the life of existing area codes. The PSC has pushed since 1999 to extend the life of the 402 area code. Without the action, the exhaust date would have been in the second quarter of 2006.

Number pooling, which features returning unused blocks of 1,000 numbers for assignment to telephone companies that need them, is one part of Nebraska's efforts to forestall implementation of a third area code or an overlay in 402. Western Nebraska is served by the 308 area code, which has a life expectancy of more than 20 years.

Commissioner Anne Boyle of Omaha said, "With new technology and ongoing competition, the 308 20-year exhaust date is no longer assured. Other rural states are seeing an alarming rise in number usage and it can happen here, too."

In making its recommendation, the Nebraska PSC noted that the top 100 metropolitan statistical areas were subject to mandatory number pooling. In Nebraska, only the Omaha area carries that designation. The PSC encouraged the FCC to take steps to allow states to mandate

number pooling for telephone companies serving smaller cities and towns.

According to the Nebraska PSC, "Telephone numbers are a public resource not an asset of the company to which they were assigned. Failure to treat telephone numbers as a scarce resource that should be conserved could lead to premature exhaustion of 402 telephone numbers."

Implementation of a new area code is both inconvenient and costly to consumers, the PSC said. "Thousands-block number pooling has been proven to be an effective method of conserving numbering resources."

The Nebraska Public Service Commission has been working for seven years to protect the state's two area codes, Commission Chairman Lowell Johnson of North Bend said.

Commissioner Frank Landis of Lincoln said, "The FCC's approval has streamlined the process for five states and it should be made available to all states."

As part of the Commission's educational effort to bring all of the 402 area code into number pooling, the Commission hosted a meeting for representatives of Nebraska telephone companies and representatives of the Pooling Administrator. The May 3 meeting drew 21 persons to the Commission Hearing Room in Lincoln, and another 15 representatives from the state's telephone companies participated by telephone links. The state's three largest incumbent local telephone exchange companies - Qwest, Alltel, and Frontier (Citizens) - already are included in mandatory number pooling plan.

A public hearing is scheduled on this matter, for Thursday, June 1, 2006, at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission Hearing Room, Lincoln.

#

Deleted: ¶